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# From the world of women to the ethnography of institutions. A retrospective trace

*Do mundo das mulheres à etnografia das instituições. Um traçado em retrospectiva*

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This article reconstructs the professional journey of its author and, taking morality and values in politics as its guiding thread, seeks to trace various theoretical and methodological developments relevant to the contemporary anthropological debate. From this perspective, it presents the investigations undertaken during her career and their connections to publications, courses, and supervisions at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, research groups and laboratories, as well as national and international networks with which these were (and are) articulated. As the title suggests, it sets out from studies of the feminist movement, followed by investigations in diverse institutional contexts with the inclusion of government policy forums set up under the principle of participatory citizenship.

*Values; National Congress; Participatory Citizenship; Indigenous Health; Ethnography of Institutions.*

Este artigo recupera o percurso profissional de sua autora e busca alinhavar, em torno do fio condutor da moralidade e dos valores na política, desdobramentos teóricos e metodológicos relevantes para o debate antropológico contemporâneo. Desta perspectiva, apresenta as investigações realizadas e suas conexões com publicações, cursos ministrados e orientações na graduação e pós-graduação, grupos e laboratórios de pesquisa, bem como redes nacionais e internacionais com as quais se articularam (e se articulam). Como o título já sugere, parte de estudos sobre o movimento feminista, seguindo-se investigações em contextos institucionais diversos com a inclusão de instâncias de políticas de governo que se constituíram sob o princípio da cidadania participativa.

*Valores; Congresso Nacional; Cidadania Participativa; Saúde Indígena; Etnografia das Instituições.*

I once read that the notion of a project seeks to express the encounter between wish and process (Pecaut 1990) and remember being intrigued by this idea since it allowed the individual, with all their intentions and desires, to be situated within a larger movement that escapes them directly but affects them and which they aim to influence in turn. Unlike a dream or fantasy (Schutz 1967), the project implies preparation, planning and actions in the world, involving a certain felicitous navigation within a realm of possibilities with complex spaces and rhythms.

The *memorial* – from which the present article originated[1] – would be, to some extent, the opposite of a project: rather than prospection and anticipation of a future, it implies the opposite direction. Paraphrasing Campos (1994), a kind of lantern on the prow in search of the attribution of meaning in the past to what does not always harbour connections of causality but those of fortuity. Aware of this tension, I chose as a subtitle the qualification of a "trace". After all, a trace is always contingent, a kind of outline sketched amid other possibilities; it also suggests uncertain displacements, route deviations, life attempts, as though they were sketches to which the subject confers new forms over time.

It is this zone of permeability between the individual and the process, between causality and the imponderable, and, finally, between a singular trajectory and a socially shared path in which I seek to inscribe this article, emphasizing reflections that I believe contribute to anthropology as a theoretical-methodological field and to its institutional ramifications.

Taking morality and values in politics as a guiding thread, I open this article by discussing my research on the feminist movement as a lifestyle, conducted in Rio de Janeiro at the end of the 1980s. Next, I present my entry into the National Congress, which, coinciding with the CPMI (Joint Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry) on the Budget, focused on the regulatory category of parliamentary decorum used in the proceedings for removing elected politicians from office (1949-1994). The dialogue between this category, the writings of Max Weber and the literature on Mediterranean honour led me to propose honour, in this context, as a hierarchy of values distinctive to political life. I then contextualize the proposal of the line of anthropological research on health policy and its main repercussions for reflections on the relationship between government policies and the production of disgust in health and sanitary actions, before moving on to my investigations into the social participation of indigenous peoples, its limitations and possibilities, in health policies targeted specifically at this population. Finally, I make a series of points and ponderations on the consolidation of the investigations in institutional contexts that gave rise to the Laboratory of Institutions and Power Practices´ Ethnography (LEIPP, DAN, UnB) where various investigations have been developed and deepened concerning the methodological specificities of conducting research in these contexts, articulated in a network linked to the Latin American Anthropology Association (ALA)[2].

## To begin at the beginning…

1 Here I refer to the *memorial* (application) for promotion to full professorship, presented at the UnB Anthropology Department on 23 September 2020.

2 I refer to the permanent Workgroup at the ALA called Anthropology of the State and Institutions, on which I have been national coordinator for Brazil since its creation in 2018. For more information on its composition and the activities undertaken, consult https://www.asociacionlatinoamericanadeantropologia.net/index.php/2016-03-16-03-49-05



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Since the outset of my intellectual journey, back at the History Faculty of PUC-RJ, the history of mentalities and the reading of Max Weber in a course on time[3] drew my attention at a moment when Marxism was dominating the discussions. A concern with the moral dimension and the sphere of values in politics, which, in retrospect, marked my entire intellectual production, seemed to already be making itself felt. However, the difficulty of imagining reasonable prospects for making a livelihood pursuing a research career in the 1980s led me to embark on a teaching degree, postponing the transformation of my interest into a research project – which eventually occurred with my master's degree at the Museu Nacional. At that time, anthropology entered and slowly took control of my life. It has now been more than thirty years...

3 This was a course given by the historian and anthropologist Ricardo Benzaquen at the start of the 1980s.

At the Museu Nacional, I joined the Comparative Metropolitan Lifestyles Study, a project coordinated by Gilberto Velho, where I worked on a master's dissertation on the feminist movement as a way of life (C. C. Teixeira 1991). The questions that guided the investigation, in my view, still retain a certain freshness today. I come to this conclusion because over recent years feminism has experienced something of a revival with many young women declaring themselves to be feminists, a situation quite different from the one I studied at the start of the 1990s. At the present moment, it would not primarily be the retrospective views of members of a feminist network (the Feminist Forum of Rio de Janeiro) most of whom were aged over forty, but young women involved in the possibility of redimensioning more or less shared projects and dreams, difficulties and limitations.



It was precisely the apprehension of limitations expressed by some of the women from the Forum that led me to ask: what is the relative impact of this experience on the way in which they interpret the world and on how they situate themselves within it, on the form in which they lead their everyday life: leisure, work, friendship, love? While this question may not seem to add anything new, since it is well-known and accepted that in feminist ideology the personal is political, a more detailed investigation showed just how far this ideology might be totalizing and homogenizing when we look at the opposite vector: the political translated into personal life under the value of "coherence".

Most feminist articulations were, at the time of my investigation, exclusively composed of women: forums, associations, meetings and workshops, national and international conferences, multiparty campaigns (for women candidates), articulations within political parties (involving women only), and so on[4]. Being a woman and engaged in the fight of women appeared to be the necessary and sufficient condition for considering oneself and being considered a feminist. This understanding of the field, however, proved precarious when a woman who worked with women victims of violence and who frequented the Forum stated that she was neither a feminist nor had much liking for feminists. The classic "what do you mean?" of the anthropologists burst to the surface! After a certain reluctance, she agreed to talk to me, and the understanding of this apparent contradiction was central to the construction of feminism as a "world of women".

4 The more recent study by Bonetti (2009) on the Pernambuco Women's Forum indicates a similar pattern of excluding men.

Her declared form of seeing women politically and affectively revealed her

differences in relation to the "feminists". Politically she had opted for women but had not done so in terms of her social relations as a whole. Much the opposite: she found it harder to deal with women because, in her words, "this education that we receive is so perverse that it makes women compete with each another" (C. C. Teixeira 1991, 127). As a result, she did not participate in the network of sociability composed predominantly by women among the Forum's feminists (like parties, trips and get-togethers in bars) and also disagreed with them politically. Her view was that feminist militancy should be a joint struggle of men and women, thus opposing the principle of male exclusion that relegated men to the role of tacit allies[5]. Consequently, I perceived that there was a fundamental experience in belonging to feminism from which she excluded herself: the adhesion to a group of women. The specificity of this "world of women" resided in the fact of demanding that the "feminine" was privileged in the multiple relations lived everyday: work relations, family, leisure, friendships and, for some women, love. It comprised, therefore, an option, a "liking" for women to be translated into the building of relations of female proximity, identity and solidarity as legitimate relations between women and, moreover, as relations to be actively sought at the distinct levels of concrete reality.

5 Martha, a pseudonym I adopted to preserve her anonymity, joined the Forum via an acquaintance who was a member but who shared some of her ideas, such as the need to include men in the feminist struggle.

At the core of this worldview, I encountered a strong emphasis on the view that social interactions are basically chosen. However, when speaking about men, I heard women reflect on the greater difficulties of forming relationships with them, suggesting that the "world of women" in which they lived was not just the outcome of the exercise of an individual or collective desire but also the consequence of a sometimes undesired distancing. In such a way, in fact, that this "world" extended beyond political association and could assume a dramatic dimension in the life of some women who, like the majority of the Forum's participations, did not have an affective-sexual orientation towards women. A relational and affective impossibility was expressed in the words of one of the interviewees as follows: "I want a country with sensitive men, heavens, can't we manage that? [...] Just the other day... I was saying: will the fate of feminism be our solitude? I think that would be far too cruel! I can't give that to my daughter, my granddaughter, solitude as [the only] option!" (C. C. Teixeira 1992).



The symbolic frontiers of this lifestyle were delineated, then, by a certain emotional tone, expressed in an internal and moral affinity, set in contrast to the surrounding society, identified as masculine (Becker 1977) (Geertz 1978) (Velho 1986). The anthropological and feminist debate on gender has become more complicated since then[6], but in my intellectual trajectory, it was the place and production of the emotions and also of values or moralities in political life that bore fruit in other empirical universes. Above all, it gave rise to a line of investigation in which various students developed their undergraduate and postgraduate studies in the Department of Anthropology. There were creative reflections on "women who love too much" (Alves 2002), the pollution of drinking water by dead bodies (Davison 2006), the artist as a political actor (L. G. Teixeira 2006), pain and suffering in the fight of family members against police violence (Lima 2006), the

6 For those interested in the diversity of this debate, I suggest the now classic reflections on feminists and women anthropologists by (Strathern 1987), as well as the difference in arguments between (Simião 2006) and (Machado 2010) and the consultation of specialized periodicals like *Cadernos Pagu* (https://www.scielo.br/j/cpa/).

symbolism of laughter as therapy (Zupiroli 2008), a former leper's management of suffering (Faria 2009), the organisation of victims of violence in Cauca (Oviedo Orsina 2014), and the production of affects as a means of conflict resolution in the judiciary (Cunha 2020).

Still in the context of this research on the feminist movement, I observed that the extolling of the modern individual (Dumont 1985), projected in terms of autonomy and differentiation (Simmel 1971), generated other impasses when any attempt was made to translate the feminist cause into a form of organisation for political action. Seeking to realize to the full the democratic maxim that all women have an equal right to speak and be heard, the Forum rejected any hierarchy in its formal organisation (coordinators, directors and so on). Power relations were expressed, however, in a subtle combination of the prestige acquired by a member's historical trajectory in feminism (with an emphasis on the older women, jokingly called "fossils") and her capacity for argumentative expression – in other words, the ability to speak well. On other hand, striving to promote equality in difference, but rejecting conflict and traditional forms of resolving disputes by majority decision, they posited that any decision had to be taken by consensus and, furthermore, that deliberations could be questioned by any of the participants who, absent from the meeting where the position had been decided, disagreed when she returned. Thus, a certain paralysis of political pragmatics appeared to reign, further exacerbated by the fact that the women also rejected the alienation intrinsic to representative democracy – that is, delegation to a representative (Bourdieu 1989). The Forum's success, therefore, resided in the capacity to shape new feminine subjectivities committed to these values rather than organisation towards the struggle – although at some moments this was also achieved. Ultimately – this was my interpretation – they sought to reconcile what appeared to be irreconcilable: construct a strong collectivity based on differentiated and equally strong individualities (Simmel 1971), simultaneously rejecting hierarchy and conflict as forms of advancing the celebrated diversity – effects of the cultivation of individualism, diversity, equality and solidarity (C. C. Teixeira 1992).

When I conducted the research, no studies could be found that explored the topic from this perspective[7] and, briefly surveying the recent bibliography, I conclude that if any such works exist today, they remain few in number[8]. This contribution to the field of studies of feminisms was undoubtedly only possible due to the encounter between a particular anthropological training (in a phenomenology of the social world, symbolic interactionism, individual and society, gender relations, and Bourdieu's rereading of Marx and Weber) with the research opportunity provided by my own prior trajectory marked by certain interests and social networks. The specific dialogue with anthropological studies of politics would be deepened in my doctorate, in a to-and-fro that would yield another contribution to the earlier references, setting out from the new field in which I became immersed: Brazil's National Congress.

7 One exception at the time was the master's dissertation by Maria Filomena Gregori, completed in 1988. Developed in the SOS-São Paulo Woman group and based on a dense ethnography, it adopts a critical approach to the effects of its form of organisation, the attention provided, and the attitudes and values of the feminists that belonged to it (Gregori 1992).

8 Survey conducted on the Scielo platform on 28/04/2020. None of the ninety-seven references found in the WoS thematic area of Anthropology presented a similar approach.

## Values and modern institutional politics: from "parliamentary decorum" to "social participation"

The same year that I moved to Brasilia, in 1991, I applied and was accepted onto the Ph.D. course at the Department of Anthropology of the University of Brasilia. I arrived in the capital determined to research the National Congress, given that it was nearby and so few studies existed on this world, central to the democracy that had recently become (re)established in our country[9].

In my first research project, I returned to the connection between gender and politics and won a scholarship from the Carlos Chagas Foundation to investigate the so-called "female caucus" in the Chamber of Deputies. While this was an opportunity to explore a research universe whose complexity promised to be quite different to my previous research at master's level, it proved to be less profitable analytically. The articulation of women federal deputies had been highly active during the constituent process and had become dubbed the "lipstick lobby", but at the start of the 1990s, it was politically inexpressive.

The way forward, then, was to adopt a broader area of inquiry and wait to see what the field held in store for me, especially given the scarcity of anthropological studies on this microcosm: at that time there was just one anthropological dissertation on the Chamber of Deputies (M. C. Costa 1980). The exercise of parliamentary representation on the Chamber's standing committees appeared to be an interesting umbrella theme for the construction of an ethnography of its institutional life. This opportunity allowed me to benefit from the discussions that had given rise to the Anthropology of Politics Nucleus (*Núcleo de Antropologia da Política*: NuAP) in 1997 – especially those on rituals. NuAP was a fertile environment for swapping research experiences and sharing interpretative hypotheses, and thus a great learning experience for everyone belonging to this network, coordinated by Moacir Palmeira (MN, UFRJ), Mariza Peirano (UnB) and César Barreira (UFC)[10].

On this trajectory, the field contained another surprise that would force me to redefine the research problem once again. In 1993, the year when I was immersed in the day-to-day life of the standing committees, a Joint Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry (CPI) was launched to investigate allegations of irregularities on the Budget Committee – an inquiry known as the "Budget CPI". This CPI invaded all the spaces of the Chamber, clearing them of its routine activities by concentrating attention both inside and outside the institution. The investigation included the forced disclosure of information on 395 confidential bank records and 267 confidential tax records, as well as authorization for 43 phone taps and 79 statements taken during 111 meetings. The CPI concluded in 1994 with the proposal for the impeachment of 18 parliamentarians for breach of parliamentary decorum and the submission of various dossiers for the Inland Revenue and the Public Prosecutor's Office to continue the investigations. I then began to create conditions within the institution to accompany the work of the processes sparked by the Budget CPI because while in theory I was not interested in media-hyped parliamentary events or in corruption, in practice the parliamentarians were and

9 Not to mention that I had a child on the way, which, I calculated, would make any long-term fieldwork in distant locations difficult.

10 The publications produced by NuAP's researchers can be found at http://nuap.etc.br/ (consulted 1 September 2021).

it was left for me to follow them.

The regulatory category of "parliamentary decorum" mobilized in the diverse statements and ongoing proceedings highlighted the dimension of values in the institutional politics of this political world in an intriguing way. Decorum was affirmed by diverse politicians based on a relationship considered central not just to modern institutions but also to traditional societies in the social science literature: the honour-shame dynamic (Pitt-Rivers, Friendship and authority 1971) (Pitt-Rivers 1977) (Peristiany 1971). Understanding politics in terms of the sphere of value proposed by Weber made it possible to elaborate a modern notion of honour and think of political action as an interested action that cannot be reduced to class interests or status – as public opinion and some social scientists presume.

I began by observing, in the wake of that shrewd interpreter of the modern western world, Max Weber, how the existence of politics as a sphere of value in itself, with its own logic and specific criteria for conduct, is a recent historic phenomenon. It forms part of an era instigated with the "disenchantment of the world", with the breaking of the religious monopoly in the attribution of meaning to human life and in the constitution of a pluralism of values, when religion becomes just *one* rather than *the* ultimate value of life. And most important of all: politics successfully became consolidated as a sphere of value in itself through a long process of expropriation of the "private" instruments of power, which ended up transforming it into a permanent institutional activity of a few: the professional politicians (Weber 1974, 112).



In this process, politicians constituted themselves as a group by successfully becoming recognised as the personification of a historically-defined collectivity whose members instituted them as leaders or representatives and, therefore, as figures of authority. It was precisely this structural distance and necessary connection between professional and occasional politicians that contained the possibility of constituting a form of honour not to be confused with the modern notion of dignity. While modern dignity relates to the existence of an essential human quality (Humanity with a capital H), honour encounters the meaning of human reality in all its historical singularity and individuality (humanities, in the plural). *The condition of belonging* – rather than modern individualism – thus proved to be intrinsic to modern political life. A belonging that in the context of Brazil's recent process of redemocratization at the start of the 1990s rejected any acclamation of the relations of inequality or hierarchical exclusion that frequently qualify the dynamic of honour and shame in traditional societies[11].

The management of parliamentary decorum in impeachment processes highlighted the fact that such belonging entailed a hierarchy of values guiding practices as a whole, thereby defining what can or cannot be done in different contexts of their lives, since professional politicians are supposedly performing this function permanently without the right to any separation between their private life and exercising their mandate. It was from this perspective that I interpreted the figure of parliamentary decorum as an institution original to Brazilian politics that makes it possible to deal positively with the continuity between the different

11 Recent research by Maíra Moraes in the National Congress on fake news has shown that parliamentary honour in this new context contains meanings of distinction, making it something like an "aristocratic democracy" (Moraes 2021).

social backgrounds of politicians[12]. By *institutionalizing* honour as a distinctive criterion of politics, the notion of decorum incorporated public life and private life, regulating them, while ignoring the segmentation of social roles, integrating them through encompassment by politics, and, in this way, affirmed the autonomy of politics vis-à-vis the surrounding normative environment. Ultimately, the "political personality", an idea also inspired by Weber, is indissociable from the whole to which it belongs and responds; a type of belonging that articulates qualified individual responsibility with the identification between individual and social group, producing the diversity of professional politicians. From this perspective, decorum consists of representations and discourses on the private domain imbued with legitimacy in the political sphere since, in this specific case, it was not a question of banishing personal relations from the public sphere – as public opinion regarding the fight against corruption usually proposes or supposes – but rather of their incorporation and regulation in a distinct form.

12 Although the term "parliamentary decorum" is used in the legislatures of other modern representative democracies, in this context it acquires meanings markedly distinct to those of the Brazilian experience.

The investigation of the different impeachment processes for breach of parliamentary decorum provided me with the pathway for the comparison that oriented these reflections. I was able to observe the futility of Barreto Pinto's attempt to allege that he had not been exercising his mandate (1949) or the request made by Jabes Rabelo for suspension of his parliamentary immunity so his case could be tried in the Federal Supreme Court (1993), the impersonal and legalist rhetoric of Ibsen Pinheiro (1994), as well as the fact that the only person tried not to lose their mandate was the politician (Ricardo Fiúza, 1994) who embodied in his defence the kind of performance that honour stipulates. Just as the mechanisms for producing honour changed (the media replaced the face-to-face relations of traditional societies as a court of reputations), so too were the central values now others (the celebration of hierarchy and distinction having been displaced by democratic ideals). However, there remained the emphasis on the image and its communicability, the extolment of the personal relations between individuals, the totality over the individual, the recognition of the subject as a whole in the production of the personality and political life. Unlike the feminist politics studied previously, here we can observe a world of democratic rituals in which the adequate expression of values is decisive, rather than the subjectivity or intensions of the actors.



As well as the field research in Congress, my doctorate was marked by presentations of the interim results at scientific events where I received invaluable feedback from colleagues, as well by publications of articles that would later help me write my Ph.D. thesis (C. C. Teixeira 1996, 1996a), likewise my work as a substitute lecturer at UnB's Department of Anthropology throughout 1995 and the summer of 1996. In both experiences, doing anthropology proved to be highly collaborative and far from the image of the lone researcher. I would continue to research and publish on parliamentary decorum, honour and relations of belonging in politics for some more years (C. C. Teixeira 1998, 1999, 1999a, 2000a, 2002, 2004, 2004a, 2004b, 2006), maintaining a line of research from which resulted and indeed still result various orientations that have contributed greatly to the understanding of this complex universe of political life in different aspects and historical moments:

parliamentary advisors (Santos 2004), relations between the Legislature and the Executive in the relaxation of labour laws (Clemente 2004), parliamentary strategies for the budget law (Ferreira e Cruz 2008), the legislative debate on the disarmament statute (R. M. Reis 2008), abortion in light of reproductive rights (Castro e Silva 2009) and the biosecurity law (Cesarino 2006), reflections on conflict and charisma in politics (P. T. Costa 2002), and on the CPI (Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry) on FUNAI and INCRA (Dalla Costa 2019). However, the start of the 2000s would pose other research challenges.

A few years after joining DAN/UnB as an assistant professor in December 1997, the loss of a dear colleague had a marked impact on my research trajectory. Martin Novión passed away at the beginning of 2003 (C. C. Teixeira 2004), provoking a feeling of nostalgia for the life still left to live and suddenly removing the head of the anthropological team of an interdisciplinary project investigating the impacts of sanitary actions on health. This project was composed of four teams from two universities: Anthropology and Civil Engineering (University of Brasilia, UnB) and Epidemiology and Health Economics (Federal University of Bahia, UFBA), as well as the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), the National Health Foundation (FUNASA) and the Health Surveillance Bureau (SVS). In this context, I was invited by my colleague Ricardo Bernardes, who coordinated the Engineering team (and with whom I had already collaborated in research) to take over the coordination of the Anthropology team. A political anthropology of health began to be designed and would yield many fruits.



Under this umbrella, I initially developed studies on the perception and use of water in rural communities in the Cariri sertão in Ceará state and in Maranhão state, a team-based research experience that would mark my trajectory forever. Carla Andrade, Jacques Novión, Luiz Cláudio Moraes and Anna Davison formed part of this trip. The theme of water would also become present in another interdisciplinary research project, this time within UnB itself. It was 2005 and the rectorship, concerned by the allocation of around 30% of its budget to water and electricity bills, decided to set up a Commission to investigate the situation, coordinated by Professor André Luiz Aquere (Civil Engineering/UnB), who also bet on the interface between engineering and anthropology to better understand the problem of water consumption on the Darcy Ribeiro Campus. The investigation involved undergraduate students from Social Sciences (twelve) and Civil Engineering (nine) in mixed teams. The locations chosen to conduce the observations on water use were some bathrooms of the Central Institute of Sciences (ICC), the Faculty of Technology (FT) and the University Restaurant – observations on both the physical conditions and the conduct in the bathrooms[13]. The research on water also led to my participation in an exploratory mission in Bissau (Guinea Bissau) at the invitation of Wilson Trajano Filho (Department of Anthropology, DAN/UnB), which gave rise to an international seminar on water; and later the organisation of a dossier in *Anuário Antropológico* in partnership with Maria Manuel Quintela (Lisbon Higher School of Nursing, ESEL; Institute of Social Sciences, ICS/University of Lisbon, UL) (Teixeira e Quintela 2011). The creation of the Laboratory of Anthropology,

13 As well as the research report (Aquere, Teixeira e Bernardes 2007) and an article (Teixeira e Dias da Silva 2011), this experience was documented in a small video recorded by myself commemorating 60 years of UnB: the film can be seen at “UnB nos 60 anos de Brasília - Professora Carla Costa: Departamento de Antropologia – YouTube” (consulted 1 September 2021).

Health and Sanitation (LASS/DAN/UnB) in 2004 became a key interactive space for researchers and research projects at different moments of their training to hold research seminars, publish, raise funds and establish inter-institutional contacts[14].

From these experiences, some reflections were developed and became consolidated, the most innovative relating to the political production of disgust (*nojo*). In the investigation conducted in the Cariri region of Ceará, disgust was expressed over the improper uses of water from the reservoir that supplied the municipal system of treated water, which, combined with the strong taste of chlorine associated with this water, meant people would not use it for drinking or cooking – contradicting what the health policies advocated (Teixeira, Davison e Moura 2011). In the research on the UnB bathrooms, disgust was expressed over the deteriorated physical conditions, combined with distrust over how the facilities were treated by other users, generating attitudes that further degraded the installations in a vicious circle: toilets flushed using feet, doors also opened with the user's feet, avoidance of touching the taps, which meant users not washing their hands. The question, therefore, was not waste but the low consumption of water due to classifications of "dirty" and "clean" not directly related to sanitary criteria but to the possibilities of preserving the limits of the body and the person's individuality in the environment concerned (Teixeira e Dias da Silva 2011). Just as in the community of inland Ceará, here the perceptions of the so-called users did not coincide with the patterns prescribed by government policies: for the former, criteria of drinkability; for the latter, criteria of hygienization and consumption. These inquiries thus allowed me to consider the valuative and moral dimension of politics in terms of its everyday diffusion via the varied connections between sociocultural order and biological order as seen from the viewpoint of the people who generally comprise the "target public" of these policies.

If quotidian life revealed itself to be the space and time par excellence of constructions and re-elaborations, both verbal and non-verbal, of meanings that enable and orient the interactions between different subjects, the principles and structures that give life to public administration over time, in its continuities and ruptures, proved fundamental to comprehending the conflicts and negotiations involved with these subjects when government policies unfold in the course of life. Thus, the simultaneity of investigations into everyday life and the meanders of the administrative institutions was initially established through an examination of the institutional museum and manuals of FUNASA – the foundation responsible at that time for sanitary and health actions among indigenous peoples (C. C. Teixeira 2008). Subsequently, the inquiry entailed accompanying meetings of the Intersectoral Commission for Indigenous Health, which advised the National Health Council (CISI/CNS). The political action here extends beyond professional politicians to become expressed in technologies of governance (Foucault 2008) and in administration as day-to-day domination (Weber 1994).

My specific entry into indigenous health and sanitation policies came through studies with and on FUNASA, beginning in 2002, but also through my work at the Brazilian Anthropology Association. At ABA I was both the general treasurer (2000-

14 LASS exited until 2013 when it transformed into the Laboratory of Ethnography of Power Institutions and Practices (LEIPP/DAN/UnB) since water and sanitation policies had become one of the axes rather than the focus of the investigations developed by the linked researchers. Over the course of LASS's existence, I pick out: the project "Perceptions and Users of Water in Small Communities: an anthropological approach" (Edital FUNASA 2003); the Anthropology of Health Workshop (Xavante UnB/FUNASA Accord, run by the Xavante health team in 2006); and the project "Indigenous Sanitation and Health Policies: a comparative perspective between Brazil and Canada" (exploratory research conducted in 2008 with funding from the International Council of Canadian Studies-ICCS, Canadian Embassy; and in 2009-2010 at Simon Fraser University, CA, with funding from CAPES).

2002) and general secretary (2004-2006). It was during the latter mandate that I also began my activities as ABA's representative on CISI/CNS where I remained until 2008, and later between 2012 and 2014. In the period from 2008 to 2012, I remained there as an invited specialist. During this period, I sought to reconcile my institutional activities at CISI with reflections on this political space. I did so by expressing a posture that marked my career as an investigator, over which I have always sought to connect my research with what in university jargon are called "extension activities": activities open to the general public, mini-courses outside the university itself, presentations at events linked to policy formulation (both university and governmental) and with social movements.

Initially the reflections on disgust and repulsion in health and sanitation policies were articulated with the political management of cultural diversity, which was becoming more visible in the indigenous context and led me to seek its historical roots, once more choosing diachronic comparison as the primary axis in my work (Teixeira e Garnelo 2014). That was how I dedicated myself to the training manuals for health officers and health visitors (*guardas sanitários* and *visitadoras sanitárias*) from the Public Health Services Foundation (FSESP)[15] – an institution that would give rise to FUNASA in 1991, along with SUCAM (Public Health Campaigns Office)[16] (C. C. Teixeira 2008). This enabled me to comprehend the continuities and ruptures between the health officers of the 1940s and the indigenous health agents of the 2000s. The most relevant without doubt concerns the distinct emphasises on the sanitation of the environment or the sanitation of people. While in the 1940s the manual prioritized the techniques needed for the construction of healthcare facilities, in the 2000s the focus was on the transmission cycle of the various diseases linked to a lack of sanitation and to the hygienic behaviour identified as inadequate of indigenous children and adults. The drawings that illustrate the indigenous health agent manual exhaustively show indigenous people defecating in inadequate places rather than present technical guidelines for small building works and for the maintenance of equipment for treating water, waste, and sewage to be developed in indigenous territories, marked by the virtual absence of such infrastructures.

Having made this observation, I returned to the reflections on repugnance and disgust from the viewpoint of their physical-political-moral connections in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the political meaning behind state actions that emphasize the lack of personal hygiene rather than the acknowledged precarious sanitation of the physical environment such as found in indigenous territories. From this perspective, I analysed that repugnance is among the emotions that distinguish themselves by directly affecting the senses, in particular sight, smell and touch, their intense physicality having the power to evoke the universe of indisputable biological truths. Thus, those who provoke repugnance in us (the repugnant person is always the other) are judged to be beyond the limits of any physically bearable diversity – after all, how can we accept and live with someone whose appearance, bodily behaviour or smell cannot be borne by our own bodies? This is why repulsion, repugnance and disgust seemed to me to

15 TN: In Portuguese, Fundação Serviços de Saúde Pública.
16 TN: In Portuguese, Superintendência de Campanhas de Saúde Pública.

indicate the boundary of tolerated difference insofar as they express embodied feelings, emotions and sensations, formed in and forming social relations, whose interlocutors must necessarily be hygienized, domesticated in their otherness, for interaction to continue or avoided and kept apart (C. C. Teixeira 2012). When such sentiments and sensations accompany government policies to combat epidemics, they have the potential to re-entrench stereotypes and prejudices decisive in the definition of who should receive care and who should be left to die, as the present context of the Covid pandemic has dramatically reminded us (Teixeira e Dias da Silva forthcoming).

The investigation of health policies and precepts of hygiene has comprised a key channel of access to conflicts and consensuses in everyday politics since they are policies that are always accompanied by the rhetoric that they are being implemented to benefit the other or the collectivity (hence the frequent use of the expression "beneficiary" for the population targeted by these actions). Consequently, these policies are permeated by practices legitimized by discourses of "benevolence" and the realization of "acts of humanity" (Kelm 1998). The exploration of both the symbolic and organizational dimensions of these policies in daily life enabled an understanding of the interactions between them as well as the mechanisms of translation between them. This approach proved to be analytically profitable too in other government policies and contexts (Silva 2008) (Dias da Silva 2010) (Pereira 2012) (Chaves 2013) (Godoy 2014) (Alvarenga 2014).



This type of analysis, which combines documents and field research, has the merit of allowing us to explore mechanisms of exclusion and subordination at the heart of democratic government policies that, like indigenous health policy, have been articulated in favour of social and civic inclusion but have to deal with the legacy of a lengthy process of internal colonization. A reminder that in democratic configurations it is symbolic violence, not physical violence, that makes itself more present.

These reflections on symbolic violence were matured in the ethnography on social participation in indigenous health that I developed at CISI/CNS for almost ten years. The mapping of the varied and complex effects of this participation required sensitive looking and listening to avoid reductionisms of diverse kinds: instrumental, evaluative or normative. The comparison with the Canadian context, explored in 2008 when I was visiting scholar at Simon Fraser University (BC), highlighted the specificity of indigenous actions in their relations with the Brazilian government for construction of their autonomy. It should be emphasized that the choice of the comparative counterpoint had already been made based on the anticipation that the contrast involving a political and legal environment that represents indigenous peoples as "nations", like the First Nations in Canada, with an environment in which indigenous peoples are constitutionally denominated "communities", as in Brazil, would potentialize the mutual estrangement and, consequently, the construction of new analytic pathways.

The contextualized scrutiny of the rhetoric of indigenous autonomy in the reports of the National Indigenous Health Conferences and in contexts of interac-

tion between indigenous people and managers that I was able to accompany over the course of these years revealed that there is one category that seems to elicit unanimity in the discussions between the different political actors in the field of Brazilian public policies for indigenous health – the category of autonomy. This undertaking revealed the capacity for the meanings of autonomy to transform through its strategic uses, its metamorphosis as a political weapon capable of creating a common field of meaning and, on this basis, express and constitute distinct and sometimes antagonistic priorities in the concrete disputes. Three meanings of autonomy appeared to me to most clearly express the tendencies in the constitution of indigenous people as a collective political subject in health policies: self-determination, participation and control. Furthermore, the management of autonomy in its diverse contextualized understandings allowed me to move beyond the mapping of meanings in play, pointing to significant slippages in the comprehension of the actions of indigenous peoples in the construction of public health policy in Brazil. It is as though the indigenous strategies shifted over the course of an asymmetric continuum whose subordinated pole was that of political action guided by autonomy as a rejection of the relation with non-indigenous people (self-determination) and the dominant pole that of an autonomy that affirms this relation, resituated under "indigenous protagonism" (participation and control). In other words, autonomy as participation and control relates to the affirmation by indigenous people of their disposition and capacity to be part of a decision-making process that concerns them primarily but is not exhausted by them. The predominance of this pole expressed a practical awareness of the links of interdependence in which indigenous peoples are inserted in national society and feel part of it (C. C. Teixeira 2010).



Continuing the investigation of indigenous participation in health policies at federal level, I reflected on the limits and possibilities of so-called *direct democracy* in the spaces of social participation formally established in Brazil's state institutions (denominated "public oversight", *controle social*, in the language of government policies). When we speak about public oversight, we are referring to the different mechanisms (councils, commissions and conferences) that until 2016 the Brazilian government, in its diverse political compositions, had created to manage what in health policy is currently called "strategic and participatory governance", including the formulation, monitoring and assessment of public policies. In this sense, the autonomy of indigenous peoples in health policies in Brazil, but also in other sector-based policies, did not involve a policy of self-government or self-administration as observed in the Canadian context (C. C. Teixeira 2009) (2010) (2011). Their actions successfully focused on amplifying forums for participation and the occupation of technical and advisory posts in the institution responsible for the health and sanitation management of indigenous peoples. This positivity, it is essential to observe, was also expressed through the implementation of differentiated health policies (in political orientations and political-administrative structures) in the context of the Unified Health System (SUS), as well as through the pedagogical function that this experience provided (Teixeira, Simas e Aguilar

2013) (C. C. Teixeira 2017). I refer to the development of an indigenous discursive skill in political negotiations with government representatives. A skill that has been expressed in the actions of indigenous leaders through the combination of: (i) the management of statistics, legal norms and the experience of life in the villages with (ii) the knowledge of the institutional possibilities available to public oversight( both of which converged towards: (iii) the construction of a sophisticated rhetoric in which differentiated citizenship, human rights and biolegitimacy are hierarchized according to context (Teixeira e Dias da Silva 2015). In making these observations I wish to emphasize that indigenous participation in public oversight is an instrument for obtaining and implementing health rights but also, and no less importantly, a value in itself, insofar as it comprises a process of learning the complex pathways of the political struggle in national society, as well as progressive recognition of indigenous peoples and leaders as legitimate political subjects.

However, the complaints of indigenous leaders concerning the non-implementation of agreed policies and negotiations, allied with the statistics on the health of indigenous peoples, which, although they had improved, remained at a level much lower than those of the surrounding society, demanded a closer inquiry into the experience of social participation – and now not just in relation of indigenous health, since complaints were also being levelled at other participatory bodies. The symbolic violence of allowing indigenous people to speak, negotiating but then not implementing agreed actions was revealed through the transformation of structural aspects of the political world into an issue of personal character – that is, through the attribution of the cause of this process to the managers who seemingly failed to respect the decisions of the councils and conferences. Hence, it is observable that the exercise of everyday domination inherent to bureaucracy (Weber 1994) when softened through "democratic management", becomes attributed principally to the moral qualities or the political and material interests of those who work in management and who are held responsible, therefore, for not implementing the guiding principles agreed for indigenous health policy. Of course, it is important to consider the type of person that performs this work, whether this is more bureaucratic or more political in kind. What should be stressed is that the emphasis on this dimension makes it difficult to perceive the limits of the model of political participation itself. I refer to the fact that it is still an incipient model whose institutional conditions legitimize the exclusion of indigenous peoples – already excluded from the formal bodies producing laws and distributing resources and, no less importantly, from the networks of personal relations that influence the acting authorities – from the everyday administration that reproduces, accommodates and readjusts the dominant political and material power relations.

Symbolic violence can be viewed, therefore, as the gentler and more invisible form whose intensity is increased whenever the direct application of physical or economic violence is negatively sanctioned by the group (Bourdieu 1989, 191-2). In a kind of social alchemy, symbolic violence fabricates legitimate authority

through the emphasis on personal relations in which work, time, attention, care, inclusion and political participation – or any other attitudes morally tuned to the environment or group – successfully generate values considered superior to ordinary ideas and irreducible to the material dimension of the world. These practices can be apprehended, therefore, as generous, free of self-interest and, above all, committed to transcendent ideals (saving lives, strengthening democracy, and so on) in a configuration in which open confrontation ceases to be grammatical. In other words, the reflection on (1) the terms under which the rules of the game to be played are defined and what can be said and done by whom and in what political-institutional contexts; (2) the place that the participative game occupies in the hierarchy of political-institutional conflicts, and the effects that being in this place produce, seem to be prohibited by the valorisation of the mechanism of participation itself (both by indigenous people and by the authorities) and by the personalization of their eventual failures (Teixeira e Dias da Silva 2019). This reflection was made possible by combining observations of the relations experienced in primary indigenous healthcare with a study of the participation of indigenous representatives in the spaces of public oversight in Brasilia. In terms of theoretical inspiration, it was fundamental to re-elaborate the concept of violence as a type of relation in which what is under dispute is the legitimacy of the arguments and accusations managed by those involves and whose actualization assumes the form of direct and/or symbolic violence, depending on the context.

Seen in retrospect, it is notable that most of the reflections that I developed over the course of my trajectory were produced collaboratively – in dialogue with students, in supervisions, research meetings and team research, editing collections and co-authoring articles and book chapters. Furthermore, the courses that I gave at undergraduate and postgraduate levels were redirected to accompany the interests that became entangled and unfolded over the course of investigation[17]. Going back over the content of the courses that ensued over these years, it is clear to me that the programs incorporated my new research problems and theoretical inspirations: anthropological studies of political life inside and outside the legislature, health and sanitation (water) policies, indigenous health, citizenship and social participation, state practices and government technologies, and the ethnography of institutions. The same can be observed in the research laboratories and groups I set up and in the supervisions I undertook at undergraduate level and on the master and doctoral courses. More recently I began to supervise a large number of students who combined field research professionally inserted in diverse institutions: Special Secretariat of Indigenous Health (SESAI), the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI), the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) and the National Institute of Historic and Artistic Heritage (IPHAN)[18], among others. A vocation that the Postgraduate Department in Social Anthropology (PPGAS/UnB) one day, under the coordination of Gustavo Lins Ribeiro, wanted to transform into a professional master's degree focused on the State. In my career, however, it comprised a development of the investigations to which I began to dedicate myself concerning the ethnography of institutions and power

17 In 1999, shortly after I joined as a full-time professor, the first postgraduate course I gave was on Simmel and Schutz – reviving interests that dominated my initial anthropological concerns. This was a course that I remember fondly resulted in the publication of a collection with works by students, various of which are my departmental colleagues today: Andréa Lobo, Juliana Dias, Kelly Silva and Soraya Fleischer (C. C. Teixeira 2000). The course would later be taught in other versions and would also be successfully adapted to undergraduate teaching.

18 The supervisions concluded under this modality were (Stibich 2019), (Dalla Costa 2019) and (R. A. Reis 2015) with (Rabelo 2018-atual), (Dianovsky 2017-atual) and (Tardelli 2018-atual) still in progress.

practices and my return to the National Congress.

## Final reflections: ethnography of institutions, lies and secrets and politics

The bibliographic production that resulted from the investigations described above was concentrated on institutional empirical universes of the State and theoretical problems that articulated power practices, values, emotions and language in action. An articulation that was, from the beginning of the 2010s, deepened through reflections on the specificity of researching diverse elites and, in particular, political and bureaucratic elites. In this sequence of possible traces, I was invited by planning and research techniques of IPEA (Institute of Applied Economic Research)[19] to give two mini-courses for them: Methodology and Techniques in Qualitative Research and Ethnography of Institutions (in 2011 and 2011/12, respectively). These experiences engendered the interest of some of IPEA's researchers to conduct an ethnography in their own institute. Two more years of research followed with a team at IPEA-Brasilia (the head office) and another at IPEA-Rio de Janeiro, resulting in articles (Teixeira e Lobo 2018) (Nunes 2018), a doctoral thesis (Nunes 2017) and a book (Teixeira e Castilho 2020), various presentations at scientific events inside and outside the country – as well as the strengthening of a network of Brazilian and Latin American researchers[20] that had already been realized at events, through participation on dissertation and thesis committees and in the co-authorship of articles and organising collections, and could now also be effected through research projects.

The productive challenge that we faced became clearer as we constructed pathways that creatively articulated with each other: research among researchers, through an ethnography of face-to-face interactions and documents, in an institution that is part of the executive structure of the State but without decision-making political and administrative power and in which a high value is given to autonomy, difference and intellectual diversity as virtues, but in permanent tension with the exercise of producing knowledge to "advise the State" – what we called research with a State function (Teixeira e Lobo 2018). We were therefore able to systematize and advance in already sketched theoretical-methodological connections, now renewed through the specificities of this research field[21].

In this endeavour, we traced the lines of force of the production covered by the ethnographic umbrella of institutions and organisations, located both inside and outside Brazil, identifying distinct emphases according to the national context (Anglo-Saxon, French, Portuguese and Brazilian). Above all, we observed the predominance of the ethnography of organisations in detriment to the ethnography of processes of institutionalization. We thus sought to articulate these two dimensions in a to-and-fro between observations, conversations and interviews in the field and research on documents and memories. The aim was to comprehend: (1) the contemporary configuration of the institution (organisation, relations, forms of work, production, values) but also; (2) the landmarks in the process of constructing IPEA (an institution that emerged during the military regime), taking

19 TN: In Portuguese, Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada.

20 I highlight the formation of the standing workgroup Anthropology of the State and Institutions, which brings together Argentinian, Mexican, Colombian and Brazilian institutions, in which I act as the director for Brazil. See https://www.asociacionlatinoamericanadeantropologia.net/index.php/2016-03-16-03-49-05

21 I shared this undertaking with Andréa Lobo (DAN/UnB) and Sérgio Castilho (ICS/UFF) who coordinated the local teams in Brasilia and Rio de Janeiro – which needed to be articulated by me as general coordinator of the project – without whom the inquiry would not have been possible.

into consideration the different moments when these records where made (who they addressed, what values prevailed, the intentionalities in dispute, but also the material and power conditions of the social space in which they were inserted).

Hence, we followed the metaphor that IPEA is a think tank – an idea made explicit by our interlocutors and by its founders in memoirs – and we thus qualified IPEA as an institution *in becoming*. We mapped how the journeys and movements of the IPEA staff took place in complex form among diverse organisations that, just for clarity, were classified in social fields – with an emphasis on the fields of politics and the production of knowledge. This framing allowed us to comprehend that IPEA's specificity lay precisely in the fact it enjoys recognition in both areas: it is part of the political network and the academic network, and manipulates distinct mediations to act in each of them, distancing itself momentarily from the other. Its strength seems to derive not from a cohesive "organizational culture" or a moral unity, but rather from the management of differences through the celebration of diversity and the skill deployed in not transforming tension into direct confrontations or clashes, enabling the creation of diverse connections through scientific and political languages[22]. Moreover, through this dynamic, IPEA's staff alternated in the central institutions of the executive government in accordance with the affinities of the different researchers with the government policy under study. In this way, the power relations inside and outside the institution were expressed as intrinsically connected to the notion of ethos: a web of meanings woven unequally over time, only provisionally stabilized and always disputable.

22 In recent research, Márcio Queiroz investigated the Foundation of Administrative Development (FUNDAP) in São Paulo and, inspired by our reflections concerning IPEA, was able to identify a similar positioning of this institution on the internal borders of the state structure (Queiroz 2021).



Based on the consideration of the power relations and the temporality in the notion of ethos, we were able to advance in the elaboration of some key landmarks of the processes of institutionalization (as cognition, morality and practice): a shared version of the history of the organisation's construction ("rationalized myths" of origin and journey); a certain form of defining the world (norms, values, relations, but also their production of models, statistics, indicators and so on) which is taken as reality itself; conformity between demands for technical effectiveness and symbolic effectiveness (between means and ends); and, finally, its resilience to instrumental challenges – that is, to analyses that seek to deauthorize it through arguments based on its modus operandi and techniques.

The next step was to construct an investigative project on the process of institutionalization not of an organisation but of a field of knowledge: anthropology in Portugal[23]. A choice that took as an implicit comparison, on one hand, anthropology in Brazil and the place occupied by anthropology in the FUNAI and INCRA Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry (CPI), which I had the opportunity to accompany as regional director of ABA and as a supervisor (Dalla Costa 2019), and, on the other, the reflections provoked by ABA in the field of Brazilian anthropology (Trajano Filho e Lins Ribeiro 2004) (Teixeira e Dias da Silva 2015) (C. C. Teixeira 2018) (2018a).

23 I undertook this study as a visiting researcher at the Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon, during 2019 – having received a CNPq grant for this work.

The first attempts to organise and interpret the material obtained were developed with the aim of contributing to an understanding of the recent process of institutionalization of anthropology in Portugal through the activities of the Por-

tuguese Anthropology Association (APA) and those surrounding the latter: its congresses, its networks and articulations. It was based on documentary research in APA archives located at the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon and on its website, interviews with anthropologists from different generations and diverse institutional affiliations, a survey of the records of APA congresses (and participant observation at the 2013 and 2019 congresses), as well as a bibliographic survey of the anthropology done in Portugal. With this objective, I sketched a synopsis of the form in which Portuguese anthropologists told the story of the discipline (landmarks, tensions and the relation to the construction of Portugal as a nation-empire) to then situate APA as a co-producer of this trajectory (C. C. Teixeira 2021).

However, at the same time that I was pursuing an ethnography of institutions in the terms described above (organisations and processes of institutionalisation), I also revived an inquiry into the specificity of researching politicians[24]. My return to research notebooks from the start of the 1990s was initially focused on thinking about the difficulties of access to parliamentarians and to some of the spaces of National Congress. This itinerary led me to reflect not on physical barriers but on the difficulties of the anthropologist in comprehending the native point of view when the "natives" are morally abject – like the politicians I had studied. This, in turn, developed into more general reflections on undertaking field research with a type of subject who is socially anticipated to be likely to lie, conceal and omit when talking to the researcher and his or her peers in spaces open to the anthropologist's scrutiny (C. C. Teixeira 2014).

In this scenario, I proposed, in relation to the first reflection, that what had previously been interpreted as a difficulty stemming from the subject and from the institutional environment under investigation might instead be considered to result from the interaction of a mutual rejection between researcher and researched – in the sense that, in studying certain elites, unlike what we do with so-called subalterns, we may feel exonerated from understanding their refusal to be researched or from trying to make the research interesting in their own terms. In relation to the latter, in returning to the Brazilian parliament, I tried to take seriously the inspirational reflections of Simmel (1964, 312) on secrets and lies where he asserts that "[s]ociological structures differ profoundly according to the measure of lying which operates in them", as well as the ideas of Weber (1999) and Arendt (2006) on the relationship between truth and politics. At this time, I had no idea just how much the near future would have in store for us concerning the production of secrets, lies and truths in politics, which became more visible after the 2014 elections and the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff in 2016.

It was precisely the impeachment process in 2016 that brought me back to investigating the National Congress, the place where I had begun my trajectory in Brasilia, but now with these new concerns. On my return, the initial reflexive exercise involved taking what I had learnt about the category of decorum in the parliamentary impeachment processes as a parameter for comprehending the specificity of the category of *crime de responsabilidade* (abuse of office) mobilized

24 I thank Antonio Carlos de Souza Lima (MN/UFRJ) for the invitation to present these ideas at the roundtable "State Making: anthropological reflections on processes of state formation" at the IX Mercosul Anthropology Meeting in 2011.

in the impeachment processes in our country – engendering a second comparative endeavour between the presidential impeachments of Collor de Melo and Dilma Rousseff[25].

Subsequently, the conclusion of the process in August 2016 enabled a careful reading of the diverse documents produced over its course, the printed and audio-visual records and the media coverage, as well as the consolidation of a perception that in crisis situations, like impeachment, doors close and few people want to speak (when they do, the interview generally yields little). This led me to postulate that a transversal approach to the event would be more productive, in this case via the clash between political documents (texts of accusation and defence, statements, reports and so on) and documents considered to be technical (issued by the Federal Audit Office, the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office and the Senate advisory office). This proposal contained the implication that participant observation was no longer the most appropriate methodology for many contemporary contexts. I thus added myself to the series of anthropologists who had been reflecting along these lines, but elaborating my own take, based on the research situation in which I was embedded, with the following inquiry: what are the conditions of possibility for the production of truth in an impeachment process?

In this framework, my understanding was that, unlike the parliamentary decorum processes, which are exclusively political, the presidential impeachment process seems to engender a trap insofar as it is based on a category of crime (abuse of office) but is judged and manipulated by politicians within the Federal Senate, transformed temporarily into a particular type of court: a *political tribunal*. In these cases, the legal and factual dimension involved in the production of proof, though it cannot be absent, was shown to always be encompassed by the political dimension of persuasion. It was also observable that the production of truth, whether in factual terms or legal-processual terms, was apparently difficult to achieve in this type of process where, as in the 2016 case, nothing was configured as a shared parameter in the clash of opinions, neither facts nor norms, and the production of a political consensus was limited by (legal) rules foreign to them. This composition of political and legal devices demonstrated, therefore, its paradoxical dimension when it proved impossible to fabricate a concordance between the conditions, forms and rules for producing the truth about the abuses of office committed by the president. Neither was any success obtained through the art of persuasion that distinguishes the rhetorical construction of truth, so central to political life – differently to what had happened in the trial of Collor de Melo in 1991.

In 2016, there was no agreed version or interpretation between politicians, as parliamentarians deemed to possess the right to speak the truth due to their election and, therefore, the idea that they represented and expressed the will of the majority of the society (itself deeply divided); nor were there any formal or juridical arrangements in which procedures, witnesses and technical reports were recognized by all sides in the construction of the facts. In this lacuna, which occurred in content and form and in the relationship between both, the social fabric and the common world became frayed and the political-legal judgment appeared

25 This interpretative argument resulted in a presentation at the forum "Between the Legislature and the Judiciary – Brazilian politics in debate", organised by ABA directorate at the 30th Brazilian Anthropology Meeting in 2016 when the impeachment process was still in progress.

inconsistent for many, including those who voted in favour of impeachment but admitted that they had done so for the sake of the country's governability and not because any abuse of office existed.

This process also enabled me to understand, disagreeing with those who privilege the "corridors of power" in the comprehension of politics, how, in a democratic state, public debate is fundamental. Being capable of politically creating a variety of documents, bringing to light or burying reports (through technical documents with opposite conclusions) and producing abundant written and audio-visual records on legal decision-making rituals, can have decisive effects in a world heir to the modernity in which seeing is knowing and, as Comaroff (2003) reminds us, in which efficacy and influence in politics reside primarily in controlling the capacity to reveal and conceal, making "reality" appear and disappear.

In relation to the theoretical-methodological dimension, I also emphasize the reflections on the value of anthropology and ethnography, arguing that this resides in their ambition to explore the processes that constitute and transform particular worlds, which give form, reciprocally, to subjects, objects and environments that permit certain things to be said and done. To achieve this aim, we need to gather fragments of events and fill gaps (silences, omissions, secrets, accusations of lying and so on) so as to comprehend how particular outcomes are produced and what challenges they pose to doing anthropology – with participant observation or not. Without doubt many decisions and negotiations occur behind closed doors. It would be wrong, however, to conclude that this was the locus of power. The manifestations of power in parliamentary debates simultaneously represent and constitute the clash between political forces actualized in diverse spaces, and, in each of them, the fight is presented in a different manner.



From this perspective, we argued that it was by virtue of the form in which disputes surrounding the impeachment of the president were politically and publicly constructed inside and outside parliament (although the latter was the focus) that Dilma Rousseff became the agent of an abuse of office (*crime de responsabilidade*) and lost her mandate over the course of this process. The rules of impeachment and the legal definitions of abuse of office may have provided the rhetorical terms and the frame within which arguments were made in favour and against, but the *truth* of the crime involved these signifiers being deployed in a field of symbolic production and material practice permeated by power in complex ways. What was observable, therefore, was the fabrication of political arrangements metamorphized into historical factual evidence (Teixeira, Cruvinel e Fernandes 2020). It was the dispute of interests of diverse types that constituted this outcome where the distinction between facts and opinions became blurred, but not because of manipulations of the ambiguity of language – as in the case of the "bravado" of the federal deputy Sérgio Naya (C. C. Teixeira 2001). Political, economic and ethical-moral practices and values were under dispute and here a reminder is necessary: the theoretical relations with value to which I referred when speaking initially of Weber's theory of value presume that the confrontation between values cannot be resolved by scientific means. Comprehending this process, now dubbed

– wrongly in my view – "post-truth", is the challenge I have set for myself over the next few years, in articulation with the institutionalization of the falsification of facts and lying in politics. A historical process, after all, of which we form part and, unfortunately, not only as observers or subjects of their effects, but also as agents: by identifying power relations in the construction of truth in the sciences, we have inadvertently contributed to making them more disputable in terms that we could never have anticipated. Reinserting ourselves in this process is among the conditions for us to comprehend this world that we ethically reject but of which we historically form part and helped create. A movement whose pathway perhaps involves – this is the hypothesis I wish to evaluate – re-elaborating the texture of the *experience* of constructing facts from the premise that their empirical and material reality is as fundamental as the values and powers under dispute, thereby seeking to unite modernity and post-modernity, each one in its own way, separately.

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